

# *The Conservation Exchange*

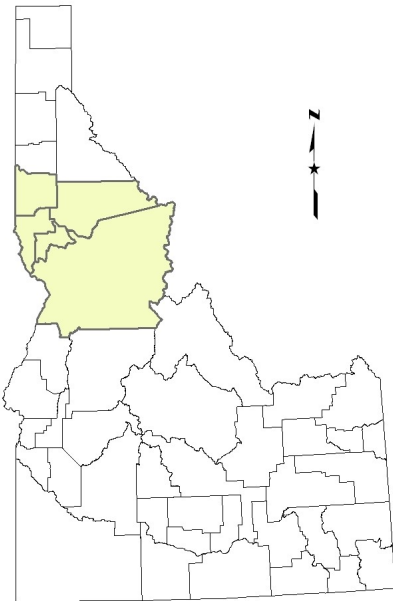
*A Communication Link for Idaho's Conservation Districts*

## ***This Issue Featuring: North-Central Idaho***

Welcome to the first issue of *The Conservation Exchange*, a collaborative newsletter to share programs, projects, technologies, and items of interest between Idaho's 51 conservation districts. This newsletter will provide a forum to celebrate Idaho conservation districts and reflect the tremendous diversity of natural resources, land uses, climates, geography, and economies evident throughout the state. An exchange of ideas between conservation districts will promote collaboration, strengthen shared philosophies of voluntary, non-regulatory natural resource conservation, and affirm the linkage of local governance with private landowners and land users.

*The Conservation Exchange* will feature conservation districts in other regions of the state and will spotlight one region per issue, with content contributed by local conservation districts, allowing them to highlight their conservation priorities and showcase their achievements. The newsletter will be distributed bi-monthly to districts and interested partners. The Soil Conservation Commission will collect, compile, and distribute the newsletter and provide other services as requested.

North-Central Idaho Conservation Districts



### **North-Central Idaho**

Conservation districts in this region, including Clearwater SWCD, Idaho SWCD, Latah SWCD, Lewis SCD, and Nez Perce SWCD, are aligned with county boundaries and have various jurisdictional interests, including private, state, federal, and tribal. There are over 2.5 million acres of private land in the north-central Idaho region with approximately 2,800 individual farms occupying over 1.6 million acres of the private land base.

Issues of common concern in the north-central region include: loss of farmland to urbanization, threats to water quality, lack of public information and awareness, livestock waste management, soil erosion, noxious weeds, and threatened and endangered species. Collaborative efforts have been organized to address some of these common issues of concern, including the Division II AFO Project.

### **Clearwater SWCD—Terry White, Chairman**

#### Carbon Credit Training Conference

The Clearwater Soil and Water Conservation District, in collaboration with the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission, organized and sponsored the first Idaho Carbon Credit Training Conference in Orofino, Idaho in March 2009. The successful conference was attended by 120 people primarily from north

Idaho, but also drew interest by participants from Oregon and Washington. Speakers at the one-day conference provided information on an array of topics including carbon trading, how private landowners can become involved in trading, methods to manage carbon trading resources for sustainability, and third party verification of carbon storage potential. The conference was made possible by the Clearwater

SWCD and the Commission, registrant fees, and speaker fee waivers. The response to this conference was so overwhelming that efforts will be made to extend this public outreach opportunity to other Idaho agricultural interests.

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**Idaho SWCD—Scott Wasem, Chairman**

The Idaho SWCD was formed in eastern Idaho County on February 2, 1954 and included 25,000 acres of farmland along the South Fork Clearwater River. The Salmon River SCD was formed in the southwestern part the county in 1956; in 1961 the Prairie SCD (Camas Prairie) was formed. These three conservation districts consolidated in 1969.

The Idaho SWCD encompasses all 8,500 square miles of Idaho County, Idaho, which is the largest county in the

state and equivalent in size to the state of New Jersey. There are two time zones in the Idaho SWCD including significant portions of the Clearwater River and Salmon River subbasins both of which provide salmon and steelhead habitats.

Idaho SWCD assists landowners with technical and cost-share assistance via three watershed projects:

- The Cottonwood Creek WQPA funded TMDL implementation project which will continue into 2012.
- The South Fork Clearwater River TMDL implementation project is

funded by WQPA and Clean Water Act (CWA) 319 funds. WQPA funding is available into June 2012 and a CWA-319 project proposal is pending.

- Idaho SWCD successfully competed for a contract with the Snake River Basin Adjudication Fund for habitat restoration in Lawyer Creek; the project also has cost-share from WQPA. Funding is available into 2012. This project is being conducted in collaboration with the Lewis SCD.

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**Latah SWCD—Cody Anderson, Chairman**

**20-ton excavator, mats, and dog**

**New Technology Protects a Fragile Meadow**

Protecting a healthy meadow from the compression of heavy construction equipment became a problem to solve this spring for the Latah SWCD on the Corral Creek Steelhead Habitat Restoration Project. Trish Heekin, Resource Conservation Planner and project lead, needed to provide access

through the meadow for construction of several spring flow-control structures. This would require a dump truck to haul rock and topsoil to the site and a 20-ton excavator.

If the wild flower, sedge, and shrub covered meadow was disturbed and bare soil exposed, weed germination would follow requiring years of costly meadow restoration. Some kind of barrier was needed that could handle the weight of the equipment, yet be light enough for a crew to move by hand.

A Google™ search turned up ground protection mats from several vendors offering 86-pound, 4x8-foot sheets made of a durable plastic design for this type of project. White mats had an added benefit of keeping the ground underneath cool.

Several structures were built at the Corral Creek project using the ground protection mats. The meadow was successfully protected **AND** the mats survived intact, ready for our next project.

Visit Latah SWCD's blog at <http://blog.latahsoil.org> for the rest of the story.

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**Two people can move the 86-pound mats**

**Lewis SCD—Jerry Reid, Chairman**

The Lewis SCD was formed in May 1941 by area farmers and ranchers to focus on resource conservation issues near the north-central Idaho communities of Nez Perce and Craigmont located on the Camas Prairie. While the Lewis SCD encompasses only 306,000 acres, 95% of that is privately owned. Dryland crops, pasturelands, and small cattle operations are the dominant agricultural activities in the district.

No-till seeding systems have been a priority for the Lewis SCD for over

12 years. A recent study conducted by the University of Idaho indicated approximately 70% of cropland acres in the Lewis SCD are seeded with no-till systems.

The Lewis SCD has two implementation projects. The Camas Prairie Groundwater Nitrate Priority Area Project Phase III provides technical and cost-share assistance for landowner cooperators to properly abandon unused water wells; inspect, maintain, and repair septic tanks; and implement agricultural best management practices to prevent nitrate seepage into ground-

water resources. This project is funded by WQPA and Clean Water Act 319 funds.

The Lawyer Creek Steelhead Habitat Restoration Project provides technical assistance and cost-share opportunities for cooperators to implement BMPs to improve water quality, water quantity, and fish habitat. The project funded through WQPA, Clean Water Act 319, and Snake River Basin Adjudication funds, is being conducted in collaboration with the Idaho SWCD as the counties shared boundary is Lawyer Creek.

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**We've Gone Paperless!**

Like many of you, our District went through tons of paper each year and spent an incredible amount of time preparing for board meetings. January 2009, the Nez Perce Board passed a "paperless" meeting policy. Nine months later, the District has declared the policy a spectacular success.

Prior to paperless meetings, 20 staff hours were needed to prepare, average meetings lasted 5 hours, and more than 3,000 pieces of paper were used for copying materials.

Now, paperless meetings are run by Chairman Steve Becker, assisted by office manager Brenda Boyer to operate the laptop and projector to display information;

**Nez Perce SWCD—Steve Becker, Chairman**

a CD is provided with reports and materials used during the meeting to all participants. The success is measurable: meetings are now 2 to 3 hours long, we estimate 36,000 pieces of paper are saved each year, and meeting prep time has been reduced by 80%.

**Streambank Erosion Monitoring**

Staff is currently summarizing data collected from the District's streambank monitoring program, which is an integral component in our watershed planning and management processes. Monitoring sites are located at points along the stream with stable flow; bank pins are installed in the fall (base flow) and the

amount of erosion is measured after the following spring runoff

event. Data is used to better understand streambank erosion patterns and how those affect the watershed.

**Snakes, Bugs, Rocks, Oh My!**

A component of the District's successful outreach program includes inviting the public to participate in watershed inventory events. The District is now recruiting for stream inventories to occur later this fall in the Catholic and Tammany Creek watersheds. Participants are promised a hike in beautiful Nez Perce County and the opportunity to visit a few snakes, bugs, and rocks, Oh My!

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Livestock waste management is an issue of shared concern among districts in north-central Idaho. The need for action was acknowledged by the Division and in November 2001 the Division II (cattle) AFO Project Administrative Committee was formed. There are several objectives for this collaborative project; forefront is to provide cooperators the opportunity to improve their operations and be better stewards of the land before regulatory actions are imposed.

The Administrative Committee developed a 12-variable ranking matrix to use to evaluate proposals objec-

tively. One

aspect accounted for in the matrix is the estimated total project cost per animal.

Other achieved objectives have included: enhanced relations among the five districts, better staff efficiencies, facilitation of operations across district boundaries, experience as a regional collaborative, and the fact that successful project cooperators are great promoters for more project cooperators.

Members of the Administrative Committee include the Division II Director as non-voting chairman and a supervisor from each north-central conservation district: Bob Reggear, Clearwater SWCD; Leon Slichter, Idaho SWCD; Cody Anderson, Latah SWCD; Dick Pentzer, Lewis SCD; and Tracy Hill, Nez Perce SWCD. Fund-

ing for this project includes cooperator contributions (~25%) and cost-share from the ISCC WQPA and the IDEQ CWA 319 programs. Technical support is provided by planners from each district and regional ISCC staff; Latah SWCD provides project administration.

An outgrowth of the Division II AFO project has been the very successful North-Central Idaho Grazing Conference and Trade Show that has been held for the past five years. The sixth conference is scheduled for Tuesday January 5, 2010 at the Lewis-Clark State College Campus Conference Center.

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**50 Individual Projects Completed To-Date:**

Total approved cost-share:	\$998,178	Total landowner contribution:	\$230,798
Total number head affected:	8,218	Average BMP cost-share/head:	\$121
Average cost-share/project:	\$19,964		

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*"This project has worked well in the north-central region," says Kyle Hawley. "The Division II model could be easily adapted by other regions to develop issue-common collaborative efforts. It may be an important alternative to consider for conservation delivery in the future."*





# The Conservation Exchange

Communicating Ideas for Idaho's Conservation Districts

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*October 2009*

*Featuring: North-Central Idaho*

*Clearwater SWCD*

*Idaho SWCD*

*Latah SWCD*

*Lewis SCD*

*Nez Perce SWCD*

*Division II AFO Project*

**Return Service Requested**

## Before and After AFO Treatments



March 2006 – Cattle have full access to the creek;  
Water trough overflows into creek

See story on Page 3



August 2009—Cattle are fenced from creek; troughs are installed on both sides of exclusion area. Sediment, nutrient, and bacteria-loading are reduced; water temperature is decreasing.